Telecom Operations by 1st October 2000. The name of the corporate entity will be Bharat Sanchar Nigam Ltd. The expected benefits from such a change are strengthening of the telecom infrastructure as a whole, and an improvement in the quality of service, which would be possible *inter alia* by the greater flexibility available to a corporate entity in decision making, resource mobilization, the building up of a customer orientation of the workforce etc.

Telephone in villages

† l758. SHRI RAJIV RANJAN SINGH: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that decision has been taken to install telephone connections in the rural areas of the country within a specified time schedule;

(b) if so, the percentage of villages provided with telephone facilities by the end of March, 2000;

(c) whether government have made any estimate regarding the use of telephone in villages already installed telephone connections; and

(d) if so, the average number of families out of 1000 families who have become the consumers?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI TAPAN SIKDAR): (a) and (b)Yes, Sir. The Government have planned to provide telephone on demand in the rural areas of the country by March, 2002. The percentage of villages provided with telephone facilities by the end of March, 2000 is 61.66.

(c) and (d) Yes, Sir. The average number of persons out of 1000 persons who have become the consumer in 6.8 in the rural areas.

Additional burden on exchequer due to free telephone facility

† l759. SHRI RAMA SHANKER KAUSHIK:

PROF. RAM GOPAL YADAV:

Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) whether on the one hand Government are withdrawing subsidy on foodgrains, LPG cylinder and kerosene oil and on the other hand it is providing telephones to the employees of telephone department without any registration

† Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.